

LutheranWoman

March 2002

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Nine Ways to Support the Bereaved
From Palm Sunday to Easter

Caregiving
Times of Our Lives





EDITORS' NOTE & LETTERS

Dear Readers,

Many of you have written *LWT* recently to let us know what you think of articles that have appeared in these pages. We appreciate your thoughts and the many insights you bring. With every issue, we learn a little more about you, and we regularly take your thoughts into consideration as we plan future issues. We are grateful for your responses. Keep writing! *The Editors*

Letters

Thank you so very much for the article "Rose's Gift" (December 2001). I have a 7" x 9" metal poster just like the one you printed, and it means a great deal to me since I, too, worked in a plant building B-24s from 1942 to 1945, when the war ended. I live about 11 miles south of the bomber plant, on my Centennial Farm, and have such wonderful memories of those days.

This is the first time I have ever read the real story about Rose. I'm so sorry I never met her. Thanks for sharing her story with so many of us. I am so glad she was a Lutheran. I was 80 last May and the Lord has blessed me with good health. I shall share this article with my co-workers from the bomber plant days.

Keep up the good work! Most sincerely,
Doris Elka Maleski—Willis, Michigan

Pastor Dan Bohlman's "Egg Ministry" (November 2001) is yet another of his thought-provoking stories. The parishioners at Yellowstone and Apple Grove

Lutheran churches are blessed to have such an inspiring and caring pastor.

Beatta Kipfer—Janesville, Wisconsin

This is a reflection on the article "The Well-Fed Soul" by Marybeth Shepard in the September 2001 issue of *LWT*. I thank you and her for it. I appreciated it very much.

She does allow that each spiritual journey is unique, but I feel she missed a major component in the growth of spirituality in my experience, and that is the role of creativity—my own and that of others. I can think of many spiritual moments through all of the arts—music, art, literature, drama, and dance—from others' skills and gifts, and also the great feeling of my own creative expression, feeling that God can speak through me and my abilities. I try to be more appreciative and open to all the messages. It's an ongoing process!

Norma K. Mossman—Hastings, Minnesota

Subscription questions? See page 43. **Send letters to:** Letters to the Editor, *Lutheran Woman Today*, 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631-4183; email to: lwt@elca.org. Please include your name, city, and state on all correspondence. *LWT* publishes letters representative of those received on a given subject. Letters may be edited for space. Letters must be signed, but requests for anonymity will be honored.

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Lutheran Woman Today (ISSN 0896-209X), a magazine for growth in faith and mission, is published 10 times a year by Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in partnership with Augsburg Fortress (Box 1209, Minneapolis, MN 55440). *Lutheran Woman Today* editorial offices are at 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631-4189. Copyright © 2002 Women of the ELCA. All rights reserved. Duplication in whole or in part in any form is prohibited without written permission from the publisher. Printed in U.S.A. Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, Minn., and additional mailing offices. Annual subscriptions: group rate, \$9.50; individual, \$11.50; outside North America add \$6 for postage. Single copies, \$1.35. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Lutheran Woman Today*, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, Box 1816, Danbury, CT 06813-1816.



GIVE US THIS DAY

A Guest at the Feast

by Marj Leegard

"YOU TREAT ME TO A FEAST . . . YOU HONOR ME AS YOUR GUEST, AND YOU FILL MY CUP UNTIL IT OVERFLOWS." (PSALM 23:5, CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION)

Of all the blessings in Psalm 23, this one is the culmination of mercy, the epitome of hospitality. I sometimes forget the promise that I will never be in need. I feel the emptiness of my pockets no matter how much fullness there is—need may be just around the corner. I am blessed with freedom from fear and the promise of rest, and I take notice when these gifts seem to be absent. But, oh the feast! To be a guest at the feast is tangible and real and often.

I remember musty, dusty years ago, when communion was celebrated with great solemnity a few times a year. We came to church early. A line of families stood waiting at the left door of the little room behind the altar and before the kitchen. One family at a time went in. We did not know the name of the room, only that the pastor was seated at a little table with a book opened before him. We signed the book. Not a word was said, but there was always the nagging notion that one day some horrendous sin would be between us and the open book. One day the pastor would ask us not to sign—sinners that we were. It never happened to

us, but we thought it might have happened to some people, though we had no direct knowledge of that.

We came to the altar, kneeling to have the pastor's hand on our head pronouncing the "gracious forgiveness of all your sins," and then returned to the altar for the bread and the wine. We could easily see why the Lord's supper was not celebrated more often. There were two other congregations waiting.

It didn't happen overnight, so I couldn't tell you exactly when the change came. We signed cards sitting in the pews and not the big black book in that silent room. We sang and spoke confession and forgiveness from our places. And when the day came when someone like us assisted at communion—a friend, a neighbor, a woman!—suddenly the feast became ours. We moved from apprehensive observers to joyous participants. When we hear, "The body of Christ given for you," there is forged a link in the communion of saints that has been and will always be. Pastor and people. Sin and forgiveness. Wine and bread. Today and next Sunday. A guest at the feast. Thanks be to God.

LWT columnist Marj Leegard and her husband, Jerome, live in Detroit Lakes, Minn.

Growing into Retirement

by Susan Thompson

A friend of 33 years, whom I hadn't seen in at least 10, recently said to me, "If the news in your Christmas letters over the last few years is any indication, you've been preparing well for this transition in your life."

I was surprised at how happy I was to receive those reassuring words. I've seen my share of change, naturally, but it's been 14 years since I made a life transition that also involved relocating. My recent retirement includes moving to Minnesota in the spring. So this life change is really two—from 40 years of employment to retirement, and from 40 years living outside Minnesota to being back in the state where I grew up. It was reassuring indeed to hear that a wise and trusted friend, with no prompting from me, thinks that I am undertaking these changes in a good way.

A point made by management consultant William Bridges has been helpful to me as I've thought about my own life changes. It's not the changes that do us in, he says; it's the transition. Change is an event; transition is the emotional and psychological process of the change.

Change and transition are not new to any of us. We all have our personal examples. And think about the experiences we have been sharing as a nation after September 11, 2001. The events of that day have necessitated dramatic and abrupt adjustments to our thoughts and actions, as individuals and as a nation. The changes resulting from that event continue still.

My own life transition is just beginning in earnest. But there are things I've already learned, and the learning goes on. Like the traditional three-part Lutheran sermon outline, my learning so far is in three areas.

The first is preparation. Preparation often happens both intentionally and unintentionally. It happens at our own initiative and because of the actions of others. For example, though I didn't realize it at the time, my own preparation for retirement probably began with my parents' retirement 25 years ago. After 15 years serving overseas with Lutheran World Federation, they moved back to the town in Minnesota where I was born and brought up. In so doing, they gave me back that place and those people (and that congregation). One result of my many visits there was the piece of lake property I bought near them. Another was the renewal of old friendships. A third result, especially important to me as a single person who is also an only child, was that as each parent neared the end of life, I found myself drawn into the family circle of my closest relatives, who live not far away.

My intentional preparation for retirement began seven years ago when I attended a retirement seminar. By the end of that event, I had decided that I could afford to retire at 62 and to build a second home on my lake property, to enjoy before as well as after retirement. What I hadn't expected was that little by little, my vacation home would become simply home. Gradually, the



Living your Transitions

decision to live there year-round after retirement began to take shape. With what I look at now as the guidance of God's Spirit made present to me through a variety of people and events, one of my last life transitions was underway, and changing even as I journeyed through it. When I retired in October of last year, the change event in my life indeed took place. But the emotional and psychological process, the transition, had been underway for some time.

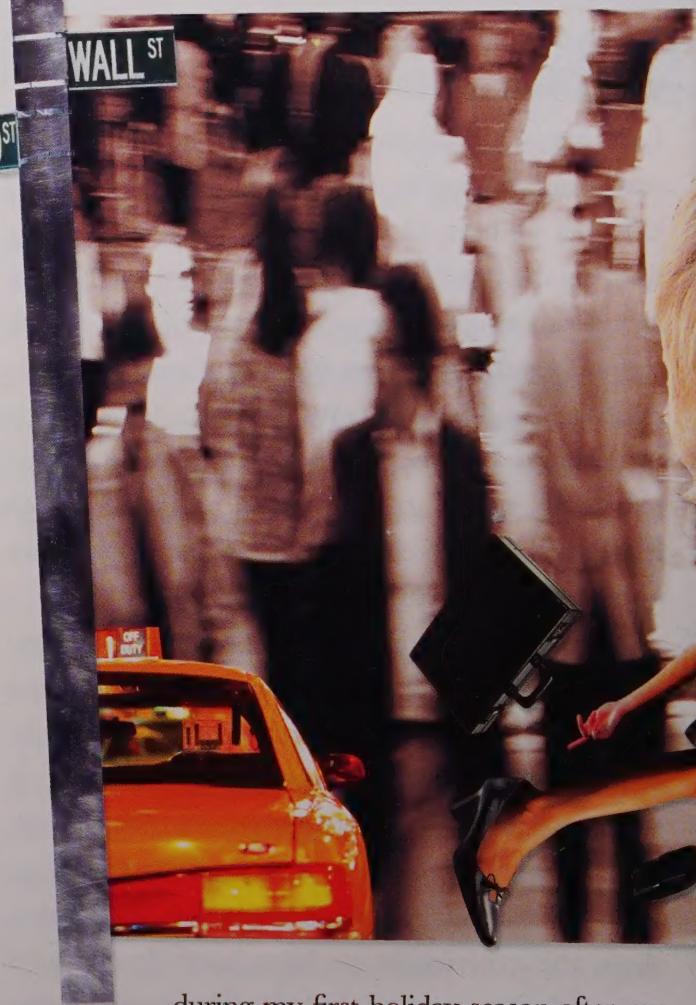
Thus the second thing I learned: living the transition. In one way or another, everyone is always in transition. We grow up and grow older, new life opportunities arise, we take figurative and literal new roads, our economic status changes, there are changes in family and relational lives, illness may come, and our place in the world is altered by circumstances beyond our control.

Living through the emotional and practical impact of dramatic life changes is usually much easier said than done. We know this from our own experiences and those of friends and family, as well as from our understanding of God's word. The people of Israel journeyed to a new role and responsibility in God's land of promise. The epistles tell us of struggles among those Jews who had become followers of Jesus; they were of differing minds on whether or how to transition from honored religious traditions in order to respond to the call to both Jews and Gentiles to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When I recently told a colleague that I was doing some deliberate thinking about transition, she told me about a cartoon she'd seen. That little joke gave me some light-hearted insight into the serious matter of living the transition. The cartoon showed Adam and Eve on their way out of the Garden of Eden. "We live in a time of transition," said one to the other. This brought me not only a chuckle but also a realization of the third thing I've learned so far: The importance of keeping

one's perspective on the continuous, evolving processes of change and transition which make up human life.

Last November, I attended a workshop on grief and the holidays, as part of my responsibility as a Stephen Minister in my congregation. When I arrived at the workshop, I remembered the grief and loneliness that I had felt five years before,



during my first holiday season after my mother's death. (It came flooding back as I listened to the presenters' tips for surviving the "first holiday season" and the participants' stories.) I felt sympathy for the new losses represented in that room, and also gratitude for my own transition out of that immediate, raw, and necessary grief. It was another reminder about perspective, about the fact that I have experienced changes and transitions in the past, that grief

eases, that adjustments can be made, that transition can not only be survived, but can bring new life.

There's a lot I don't yet know about the present change in my life and the transitions I will continue to make. I know what is good so far, and what I



anticipate to be good in the future. I have some fears and concerns. What will happen to the economy, and how will that affect, among other things, my finances? Will what I am planning work for me? Will I be wise enough to remain open to new insights God's Spirit may bring, even if those insights suggest new directions in my well-prepared plan? And finally, how will all this be as I age?

Whatever comes, I do know that transitions are not all our own work. Family, friends, and congregations can provide crucial support. And God, who set in motion our very lives and gives us hope beyond ourselves in Jesus Christ, walks with us. In transitions I have made in the past and still make today, I am strengthened by God's words in Isaiah 43:1-2, 4.

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. . . . Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you."

In the words of June Eastvold:

"It's not the fromness or the towardness
But the witness that's at heart.
Not the upness or the downness
Or the ending or the start.
It's the taking of the journey
With seekers on the way;
It's the Christ beside the pilgrim
Who is ever there to stay."

("Pilgrimage" from *Another 2nd Chance*, by June Eastvold, © 2001 GAM, Bellingham, Wash., all rights reserved. Used by permission.)

Susan Thompson served the ELCA Division for Outreach from 1988-2001. She worships at St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Park Ridge, Ill., where she sings in the choir and is a Stephen Minister. She will move later this year to her lake home near Ottertail, Minn.



~ A RELATIONSHIP OF GIVING AND RECEIVING ~



by Pat Henke and Ragnhild Preston



LWT RECENTLY ASKED A MOTHER AND A DAUGHTER EACH TO REFLECT ON HER CAREGIVING EXPERIENCE.

MY NAME IS RAGNHILD PRESTON. I'M 96. I WAS BORN IN MADISON, WISCONSIN, IN 1905, the daughter of a Norwegian immigrant



mother and a first-generation Swedish father. When I was seven years old, my family moved to a farm near Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and that is where I grew up. In 1927, I graduated from the Wisconsin State Teachers College in Eau Claire, and I taught for many years in a variety of schools. I enjoy sewing, crocheting, baking, traveling, and reading, even though I can't do as much of them today as I used to.

What are some of the special times you remember most as you watched your daughter, Pat, grow up?

I remember how proud I was of her when, at age 4, she recited the first verse of "Jeg er sa Glad" in Norwegian at the Sunday school Christmas program. Before she started school, I always took her with me to Mission Circle or Ladies Aid at church. At one of those meetings, she was asked what she wanted to be when she grew up. She promptly answered, "A missionary to Madagascar." The lady then asked what her mother would do if she went so far away. Pat answered, "Oh, she'll be so old then."

Family trips were special occasions; we visited all of the then 48 states by the time Pat graduated from high school. 4-H Club projects occupied a big part of her life for many years, and she won many prizes at the county and state fairs. And the day she graduated from St. Olaf College was very special!

What are some of the everyday things that stand out, that as you look back, you really appreciate?

She loved stories, and we always read to her at bedtime—a secular story or fairy tale, then a Bible story, then a prayer. She was very independent and self-sufficient, but in a good way. She loved school and walked the six

blocks to kindergarten by herself, often trying out new routes, much to the consternation of her little friends.

How would you describe your relationship with your daughter over the years?

Wonderful! After she left home, we kept in close touch through letters. From the time she was small, I felt it was important to listen to her and always took time for that.

If you had to sum up your feelings for your daughter in three words, what would they be?

Love, joy, faith. I have always put her in God's care, especially when I couldn't be there to protect and care for her.

When did you realize your living arrangements would change?

In November 1993, my husband suffered a massive stroke. Pat and her husband, Bill, were working in Slovakia as volunteer missionaries at the time. They came back to Fall Creek, and I moved in with them while Sherman was in the hospital and then in rehab. In the spring, we moved back to our little farmhouse. That was okay for the summer, but I knew that it

would not be a good idea for us to stay on the farm, where we were quite isolated, in the winter. That was a tough decision, and Sherman was not at all happy about it. Pat and Bill arranged for us to move into another condominium they owned in Fall Creek, which was directly under the one they lived in. This gave us our own space and privacy and a certain amount of independence, but Pat and Bill were right there whenever we needed them. Because of this arrangement, I was able to care for Sherman at home until the last few months of his life.

Sherman died in July 1997, and since then I have continued to live in the condo. It's a perfect arrangement! Pat and Bill and I have coffee and dessert together nearly every evening, and they frequently bring me hot cereal for breakfast. I get "Meals on Wheels" at noon, and there is usually enough for my supper, too.

I stopped driving when I was 93 years old, but I still own a car. I have a driver's license good until I'm 104! It's hard to be dependent on others for all my transportation; I was usually the one who gave rides to others. But my family and friends are very good to me. They take me to church, out to eat, and wherever else I need to go.

What were the challenges you faced? What were your feelings, questions, doubts as you worked through them?
The loss of my independence was probably the hardest thing. That and the lonesomeness after my husband died. But everything has gone so well. I'm happy and satisfied with my life. Life is a gift, and it does not end at 65, 75, 85, or even 95. We have to make the best of it at any age.

“ LIFE IS A GIFT, AND IT DOES NOT END AT 65, 75, 85, OR EVEN 95. ”

What changes have you experienced that have made you grow closer in an unexpected way?

We were close before, so there is nothing surprising about the continued closeness at this time.

Has faith impacted your relationship with your daughter?

Yes, of course. Knowing that we share our Lutheran faith makes everything easier. And not just with my daughter, but with her husband, too. My son-in-law is so good to me! The three of us go to church together every Sunday, and Pat and I attend a weekly Bible study.

What is a low point for you? What brings you down?

I really don't have any low points. The only thing that concerns me is the fear that I will become completely incapacitated—that I won't be able to care for myself at all. And I pray that God will take me before that happens. I do not fear death, but I do fear becoming a burden to my family.

What is the best part of your day?

Whenever I have visitors. I look forward to coffee and dessert with my daughter and son-in-law. Just sitting around the table talking is the best part of my day.

What one thought do you want to share with *LWT*'s readers as they think of their own circumstances? Is there a source of support or strength that you have discovered?

Morning and evening devotions give me great strength and a feeling of contentment. I try not to dwell on the past—except for the good parts. What concerns me is my life now, and to seek the will of God for me today. I can't do a lot anymore, but I try to help out in whatever way I can—by doing some mending or baking, for example. And, above all, I pray—especially for my family, but for others, too.

I AM PATRICIA PRESTON HENKE, BORN 65 YEARS AGO IN EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN.



What were some of the special times you remember most growing up?

It's interesting that the times I consider special are the same ones my mother mentioned. Christmas was always a very special time, with lots of Norwegian foods and traditions.

What are some of the everyday things about life growing up that stand out as special, things that, looking back, you really appreciate?

I was raised in a Christian home. We thanked God before every meal. On Sunday mornings we were always at church and Sunday school. Mom and Dad were frugal, but not tight. I appreciate the lessons I learned from them about the difference between needs and wants. And the fact that they saved and carefully invested their money means that Mom doesn't have to worry about finances today.

My mother's mother lived with my parents from about 1943 until she died in 1960. So I had an example of both the positive and negative sides of three generations living together.

How would you describe your relationship with your mother over the years?

I never doubted that I was loved and cherished. Of course there were the usual mother-daughter spats, but my mother always took time to listen to me. My parents expected the best, but never made me feel like a failure. They encouraged me to succeed, but never nagged. They supported me in my desire to be independent and spread my wings. Since they loved to travel and see new places themselves, they understood my desire to go to California and then to Germany to teach school. They weren't happy when my husband accepted jobs in Korea and in Germany, but they didn't try to hold us back.

If you had to sum up your feelings for your mother in three words, what would they be?

Love, respect, friendship. Love is, of course, the most important thing. And respect is basic to the parent-child relationship. My parents demanded respect, but they also earned it. At the heart of any good relationship is the friendship factor—warmth and caring. It wasn't until I went away to college that I appreciated the fact that my mother and I were truly good friends.

When did you realize your living arrangements would change?

Bill and I retired early so we could travel with a purpose. When my father had his stroke in November 1993, it soon became obvious that my parents were going to need our help on a long-term basis. Fortunately, we had a near-perfect living arrangement in the condominiums we owned in Fall Creek. By the time winter came, Dad reluctantly admitted that it

was a good arrangement. With Mom and Dad in their own unit directly below ours, we could all have our privacy and space, but at the same time, we could be available whenever Mom needed help caring for Dad. Mom is still quite independent, but she needs help in the morning and at bedtime. I usually drop in several times during the day.

What were the challenges you faced? What were your feelings, questions, doubts as you worked through them? What challenges remain?

We did, most certainly, have to change our lifestyle and plans. With prayer and the Lord's guidance, we worked through that. But there was no question in our minds that this was what we needed and wanted to do. It would have been a much more difficult choice if we had had to give up travel entirely. But we found a very caring and competent young woman who stays with Mom at night when we're out of town. Wonderful neighbors, friends, and our son look in on her frequently, and our daughter, who lives in Chicago, calls often.

What changes have you experienced that have made you grow closer in an unexpected way?

Since we were already very close, I'm not sure that this change has made us any closer. But it is certainly true that the several-times-a-day contact has strengthened our bond. Writing Mom's memoirs has brought us closer together, too. We did that over a period of a year and a half—many hours of remembering, talking, writing, and rewriting.

Has faith impacted your relationship with your mother? Living through transitions naturally calls for faith—faith in ourselves and in our capacity to change, with the Lord's help. Faith prevents resentment over things that cannot be changed.

What is a low point for you? What brings you down?

It's rare that anything really brings me down. Like my mother, I'm very upbeat and optimistic. But I was extremely worried during the time when Mom had one major health problem after another. There were days when we were really afraid we were going to lose her, and the doctors were not at all encouraging. We did a lot of praying! She bounced back from all her ills and has stayed out of the hospital and emergency room for well over two years now. I'm sure it's her positive attitude and optimistic outlook on life that have kept her going.

What is the best part of your day?

I enjoy the time I spend with my mother, and the quiet time I spend with my husband at the end of the day.

Often I feel guilty for not spending more time with my mother. She is a very people-oriented person. She never demands to have anything done for her, or to be taken places; but she's always very grateful for whatever is done.

What one thought would you want to share with *LWT*'s readers as they think of their own circumstances?

My source of strength is the knowledge that my basic worth comes from the fact that I am loved and saved by God. That gives me the strength and courage to face anything. But watching my mother age is also a source of comfort and strength. Her optimism and sunny outlook on life are a marvelous model. I don't fear old age.

Pat and her husband, Bill, live in Fall Creek, Wisc. During their working years, they lived in Germany, Korea, and several places in the United States. After retirement in 1991, they served as lay volunteer missionaries in Latvia, Korea, and Slovakia. They are members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Fall Creek.

My Eyes Are Awake...

by Audrey E. Berg

“Lord God, show me what I can learn as I lie awake and meditate.” This was my prayer during a difficult time when I was dealing with serious health issues. I often awoke very early to worry and pray desperately, fearing for my future.

Though widowed, I had been enjoying life: a pleasant townhome, traveling, driving my car, involvement in my church and family. Was my good life about to change? Would I be moving into an assisted-care facility, away from my church, family, and friends?

As time passed, I continued to lie awake during the night with many questions and prayers.

I was reminded by my enforced idleness and the accumulating dust that I had previously been a perfectionist in caring for myself and my home. Now, dependence on family and friends made me see that I didn't need to try for perfection. I became more aware of how many caring family members and friends I had in my life. I breathed a “Thank you, Lord.”

Change can be difficult and fearsome as one grows older. “Am I ready for all this change?” I asked myself. In another early morning session of sleeplessness, I prayed, “Lord, help me to accept changes in my life as life with all its twists and turns.”

Amid my pain and apprehension, my thoughts went to friends and family members who were having their own problems. I prayed, “Lord God, strengthen

my ability to understand others and to have sincere compassion for them—compassion like that which comes from you, Lord.”

The more fretting and worrying I did, the more I repeated my desperate prayers until they became almost meaningless. Is this what God wants from me? Does God hear me? Was I telling God to give me what I need? “Lord, help me to have a simple faith with an attitude of patience and acceptance,” I prayed.

It is difficult to wait for the Lord. It takes patience, which I do not have in abundance. I am learning.

But I have learned a few things during my wakeful hours. Don't take good health for granted. Thank God often. You don't need to be perfect, just yourself. Be ready to accept challenges and changes in your life as life. See others' pain with more genuine understanding and compassion and a less judgmental attitude. Pray for others. “Panic” praying may be less helpful than simple faith that lets events unfold according to God's plan.

What will you learn while you wait for the Lord?

Audrey E. Berg, a former elementary teacher, is a member of Transfiguration Lutheran Church, Bloomington, Minn. She is a mother, grandmother, and widow.

*“My eyes are awake before
each watch of the night, that I
may meditate on your promise.”*
- Psalm 119:148



MOTHERING SEASONS

Blessed Are Mothers Who Mourn

by Kirsi Stjerna

MARGERY KEMPE, A 14TH-CENTURY MYSTIC WHO HAD FOURTEEN CHILDREN, HAD THE GIFT OF TEARS. WHEN SO MOVED—AND SHE WAS SO MOVED EASILY AND OFTEN—SHE WOULD SOB AND WAIL, MUCH TO THE ANNOYANCE AS WELL AS AMAZEMENT OF MANY. SOME FOUND A REDEEMING EFFECT IN HER TEARS AND RESPECTED HER BECAUSE OF THEM.

I don't have the gift Margery had. Some of my friends have eyes that tear up at the slightest provocation, whereas mine stay dry most of the time. Nevertheless, sometimes it happens, and the tears take over, like when I'm watching the movie "Terms of Endearment." When it gets to the part where Debra Winger's character is dying of cancer and saying goodbye to her children and husband, I'm sobbing as I imagine the pain my spouse or children would feel if I died before they did. That is a scary thought.

Last summer, that fear became very real as I underwent testing for a possible serious illness. I prepared for the worst and made contingency plans for my family. In the end, I was blessed to be free from a terminal illness. But I was left thinking of those parents who have to kiss their children goodbye until eternity.

Saying goodbye is the time when many of us make acquaintance with tears. We cry in the event of

separation; goodbyes are hard. Just ask my parents, who still grieve that I am living an ocean away—and I am already a middle-aged mother with my own children! Every summer, my family goes through the pain of the sadness of goodbyes. It happens when I'm about to take my kids and our baggage and return to the United States from Finland, where my family and roots are. That horrible "last night" wailing comes inevitably, as if to wrap me in a blanket of tears woven by my mother, my sister, my aunts, my grandmother, my niece, my godchildren, even my brother-in-law, and—most of all—my father.

He and I usually are the last to lose our cool. We lose it when my dad takes us to the early morning bus to Helsinki airport. After we're out and the trunk's unloaded, he starts looking to see if he's missed anything in the trunk, as if one more suitcase might be lurking there next to the spare tire. But he's really just trying to hide the big tears running down his cheeks. His tears wet the cheeks of my children as they are held tight, for the last time, for a while. As the bus starts moving and I see the receding image of my father waving next to his car, it's my turn. Then back at home, the after-tears come, and I say to myself, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

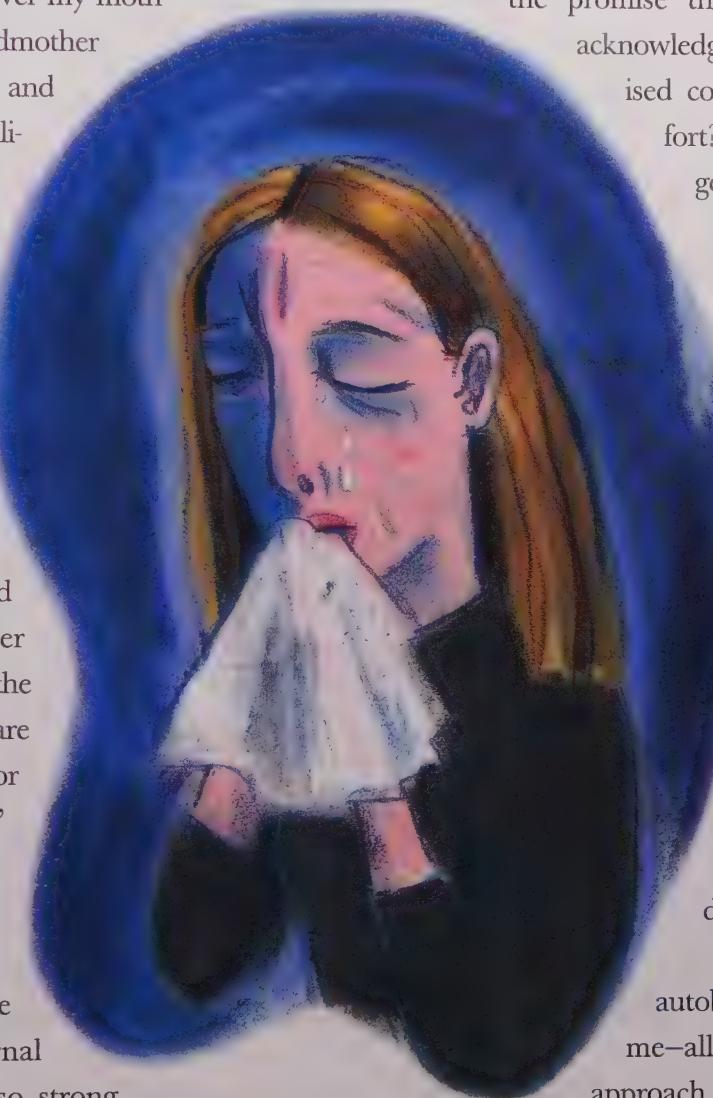
That verse came to mind even more clearly last summer because it seemed as if the goodbyes were sharper than ever. I remembered those words as I was driving home from the hospital where I had dropped off my gravely ill mother, against her will. At the same time, her own mother lay not far away in another hospital ward. In sorrow over my mother's illness, my grandmother had suffered a stroke and temporarily lost her ability to speak. Talk about grieving your heart out! Leaving my mother there, not knowing whether I would see her again next summer, was one of the hardest things I've ever done. In such sadness I could see no comfort other than the promise of the gospel that "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

As I grieved for my mother's and grandmother's suffering, I learned about the depth of the maternal bond that makes us so strong and so vulnerable at the same time. Seeing my 80-year-old grandmother nearly die of her grief for her 58-year-old daughter, and my mother trying to hide the tears until we had said goodbyes and I left, gave me a bittersweet foretaste: As mothers, when it comes to our children, we shall never be immune to pain. We are all up for repeated heartbreaks and will

find ourselves mourning and crying because of, with, and for our children. "You'll understand when you are a mother yourself," my mother used to say. Indeed, I now understand.

The gospel's words of the blessedness of those who mourn make maternal grieving tolerable: It is the promise that tears and sadness are acknowledged by God, who has promised comfort. What kind of comfort? We don't know, and that is good, because the comfort of the God of the cross may not always please us. But what does please us is that God has prepared a blessing, a comfort, for those who mourn. God recognizes sadness and the situations that bring tears as not trivial but special, sacred moments in which we may be open to receive the grace we so badly need. Mothers, then, should be up for a double blessing, right?

Reading Margery Kempe's autobiography used to annoy me—all those tears. Now, as I approach the same age and station in life as she was in her crying years, I don't see her as that strange anymore.



Kirsi Stjerna is assistant professor of Reformation church history at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. She is a member of Christ Lutheran, Gettysburg, Penn.



NINE WAYS TO SUPPORT THE
BEREAVED

by June Cerza Kolf

WE'D ALL BEEN LAUGHING AT DINNER. having a good time, just a group of friends sharing a meal and interesting conversation. I got in my car, still smiling, and began to drive home. A few minutes later a stray tear rolled down my cheek, and then another. Pretty soon I was constantly brushing at my eyes so I could see well enough to drive. A single sob escaped and then another, until my chest was heaving and I was drowning out the music on the radio.

This is something I have come to expect in the months since my husband's death. Good moments, quickly soured for no apparent reason, catching me completely by surprise. Grief spasms, we appropriately call them at my grief support group meetings.

The very next night, driving the same route home, I hummed a George Strait tune and tapped my fingers on the steering wheel. My mind was at peace, and I felt cheerful and mellow inside. No longer surprised by the emotional roller-coaster ride I'm on, I enjoy and appreciate the quiet moments.

I now recognize that an exceptionally bad day will be followed by an extra-good one. Gifts from God, I call these, given to make up for the suffering I have endured. Other gifts also come my way frequently, in the form of a golden harvest moon, a spectacular sunset, or a rainbow after a rare desert shower. It seems like the sky is saying, "God hasn't forgotten you or your anguish. There are still blessings to be found if you are just willing to look outside yourself to find them."

I spent my career working with terminally ill patients and doing bereavement follow-up. I was the leader of grief support groups for more than 10 years before my own loss, so there haven't been many surprises. However, I much prefer sitting at the end of the table, as the leader, to being one of the grievers.

As a griever, I wish non-grievers understood the process better and could offer more support to us walking such a difficult path. Many people have disappeared from my life because they no longer feel comfortable with me. After my husband's cancer diagnosis, the phone stopped ringing, and by the time of his death, only a few brave people wanted to be in my presence. So I made a new circle of friends, people who understand and are also grieving. They don't think it's crazy to be up one minute and down the next or to have tears fill my eyes at unexpected

moments. They know how important hugs are and that sometimes just having someone hold my hand is the greatest gift I receive that day.

The emotional support people receive after the death of a loved one is so important. The following suggestions may help nongrievers feel more comfortable reaching out to those who grieve.

BE THERE. In the beginning, let the griever know you care. No words are necessary. It is your presence that is important. After my husband's death, Tammie came and sat next to me and read from her Bible. Her voice was soothing and the words brought me comfort.

ACCEPT SILENCE. A grieving person is adjusting to many new experiences. Silence allows time to sort out all the new events that are taking place. Betty arrived a few days after the death and said, "You don't have to visit with me. I'll just answer the phone and take messages. I'll be here in the house with you if you need me." Like the comfort Tammie had brought, Betty's quiet presence, letting me know that I did not have to entertain a visitor, was a relief.

PROVIDE PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE. Do not ask, "What can I do?" or say "Call me if I can do anything." Instead, look and see what needs to be done and do it without forcing the griever to make decisions. Linda saw the overflowing laundry basket and took care of it, then washed the dishes and cleaned the kitchen counters—all tasks that had been bothering me, but that I did not have the energy to take on myself.

AVOID CLICHÉS. Instead of saying, "Time heals everything," it is preferable to say, "This must seem like it will never end." Instead of, "I know just how you feel," say, "The pain must seem unbearable." Grievers need to know that you are hurting for them

and that you are not rushing them to forget their loss. "I miss seeing Jack in the yard. We really loved him," my neighbor said, letting me know that I was not the only one noticing his absence.

SEND WRITTEN MESSAGES. Telephone calls can sometimes feel intrusive to someone whose moods are unpredictable or is struggling with many daily adjustments. A card, note, or e-mail can be read when it is convenient. After six months, I still receive a couple of notes a week in the mail—often from people I have only met once or twice, or members of my church. One friend, Bonnie, who moved to Alabama five years ago, sends an e-mail almost every day. These messages make me feel less alone and remind me that people care about me.

SHARE MEMORIES. If sharing memories leads to tears, that is perfectly natural. Tears are both healing and soothing, and so is laughter. When I get teary, I need to be reassured that it is all right. Laughter is good, too. After my husband's death, a friend reminded me that when she met my husband she thought he was a runner. I told her then that the farthest he ever ran was from the couch to the refrigerator. We continue to laugh about it to this day.

REMEMBER SPECIAL DAYS. Holidays and anniversary dates are especially difficult for grievers. Memories land like physical blows. My husband died on a Thursday, the 11th of the month. For the first few months, each Thursday was the worst day of my week. The eleventh of the month was a major milestone. Birthdays, anniversaries, or holidays spent without the support of a friend can be especially painful. My daughter sent a card and touching note on the anniversary of my wedding. The card made me cry, but also let me know I was loved and remembered.

LOOK FOR THE FORGOTTEN GRIEVER. The widow or obvious next-of-kin often receives all the sympathy. My daughters told me that when someone mentioned their father's death, they would ask, "How is your mother doing?" Not, "How are you doing?" My husband had been like a father to my son-in-law for 15 years. His loss was significant, but he received no sympathy cards or words of encouragement. People had no idea of the impact the death had on his life.

ALLOW FOR THE GRIEF PROCESS. After being with my husband for 43 years, I do not expect to ever be the same. I will find a new "normal" life and reach a point of peace and joy, but it will not come overnight. It will take me many months, possibly years, to process this life-changing event, and I hope people will understand and not rush me. Sue, whose husband died nine years ago, told me, "Honey, just cry all you need to and call me so I can cry with you." Likewise, Helen says, "I give the best hugs in town (she does)! Call when you need one. I never run out."

My loss will need to be acknowledged for a great length of time, not just a few months. A simple statement of support such as, "I am so sorry. How is it really going for you?" is all it takes to ease my sorrow momentarily. Isolation on top of grief causes lasting anguish. However, a little support goes a long way. Words from your heart are like a soothing balm to the gaping wound caused by the loss of my loved one. Someday all that will remain of that wound will be a scar. It will show I am a survivor, and I'll share it to encourage others.

June Cerza Kolf has written six books dealing with grief. After the death of her husband, Jack, in May 2000, she is finding her own way down the path of grief toward new purposes and goals.

What Young Women Have to Offer

MAYBE IT WAS BECAUSE I WAS HAVING A LOUSY DAY—THE ACCUMULATION OF A 60-HOUR WORKWEEK, A HUSBAND OUT OF TOWN FOR TWO WEEKS, GETTING A PRESCHOOLER TO AND FROM DAYCARE AND INTO BED EACH NIGHT, AND A CONTRACTOR who had cut a hole in the wrong place in a wall of our home—but your March 2002 IdeaNet questions really struck a nerve. You asked, “What have you gained from being a part of Women of the ELCA? What experience could you share with young women?”

Your questions assumed that you must be an older woman to have any experiences worth sharing. I am a younger woman (35), and I have been actively involved in three ELCA congregations in the past 10 years. I feel that many of my older counterparts need to be more open to change.

Too many times I have heard, “This is the way we’ve always done it.” Likewise, I have also heard, “The young women won’t help with” Some younger women, myself included, want to help with the work of the church but find that the old ways—weekday Women of the ELCA meetings, daytime circles, and so on—make it impossible for us to do that.

My question is: “Can older women pass the torch by empowering and supporting young women—working women, single mothers, and so on—so that we can carry on the work of the church in today’s world?” One idea might be for an established circle of older

women to offer childcare during meeting times for a new younger women’s group. Or maybe the young women could do a family game-show style fundraiser with concessions instead of the traditional annual church dinner. What other ways can you think of to utilize our talents from God and to work cooperatively in Jesus’ name as Women of the ELCA?

Amy Farlinger—Immanuel Lutheran, Cresco, Iowa

Bibles and Bagels

Several women in our congregation get together one morning each month to share in the *LWT* Bible Study. The unique thing we do is discuss the articles too. This *Lutheran Woman Today* “Bibles and Bagels” study group attracts younger women as well.

Annette Remsing—Grand Rapids, Michigan

Including Working Women

Our Women of the ELCA unit has been shrinking in members for several years. We decided to try a new schedule for our monthly program meetings. We meet September to May, and every other month we include an evening program so more working women can participate. We have also mailed a survey to every woman in our church so that we can meet more of their needs.

Lois Francis—Phoenix, Arizona



BOOKMARKS

Walking with Hildegard

by Linda Post Bushkofsky

I'M NOT SURE WHERE MY FASCINATION WITH HILDEGARD OF BINGEN BEGAN. HILDEGARD (1098-1179) WAS A 12TH-CENTURY BENEDICTINE WHOM I LIKE TO THINK OF AS A RENAISSANCE WOMAN—BEFORE THERE EVEN WAS A RENAISSANCE!

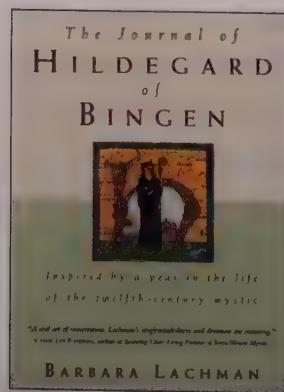
Hildegard was her parents' 10th child and their tithe to the church; she was given over to the care of an anchoress in a monastery when she was eight. She devoted her life to God and later became abbess of a Benedictine monastery in Bingen, Germany. She was also a composer. In fact, her music is believed to be the first extant music composed by a woman found in written form. She was also an herbalist, writer, preacher, and visionary. Within the last decade, Hildegard's many writings have become available in English, and many of her liturgical compositions have been recorded.

What I appreciate most about Hildegard, and why I see her life as a model for many 21st-century women, is how she embraced all of life as a gift from God, thus providing the balance that so many people seek these days. She understood the human relationship to other parts of creation, especially flora and fauna. She also simply assumed that there were no limitations on the life of women, so she took leadership roles within the religious, educational, and political spheres of her community. And all this in the 12th century!

Encounter Hildegard this Lent, during this time when our church calendar signals the renewal and rebirth that correspond to the signs of renewal and rebirth we experience in nature in the Northern Hemisphere. May you, with Hildegard, be able to proclaim: "I kiss the sun, embrace the moon and hold it fast; what you have made to spring up for me is enough for me. What more should I desire, what things that I do not need?"

As your book group gathers, or as you read Hildegard's works alone, consider listening to a recording of Hildegard's music. One of the most haunting renditions is "Spiritual Songs of Hildegard," performed by Mimi Dye on a solo viola (available from Morehouse on cassette and CD).

The Journal of Hildegard of Bingen,
Barbara Lachman. Bell Tower, 1993.



Using both historical documents and Hildegard of Bingen's own works, Lachman creates a fictionalized journal for about a year in Hildegard's life, Advent 1151 through Epiphany 1153. Lachman's efforts reveal a bit of the range



and depth of Hildegard's accomplishments, helping the reader explore the mystery of life and faith, all too often missing in our 21st-century world. With entries for most Sundays during this period, Lachman as Hildegard writes of her visions, the vagaries of human nature, her ill health, her musical expressions, and the everyday life of a religious community. This journal puts you in touch with the rhythm of the liturgical year, and the daily Divine Offices, bringing a certain cadence to your own life. It is a fascinating introduction to a most extraordinary woman of faith.

In the entry for Palm Sunday (March 23, 1152), Hildegard says her "inner senses are always open to the sights that God will reveal to me, my ears alert to the Voice of Wisdom, but the blessings of the Great Silence are particular rich . . ." How are you open to God in your life?

On the feast of St. Augustine, Hildegard writes, "the greatest problem lies in trying to integrate everything, to invest all with meaning, see it all as part of a larger, more meaningful life." How do you wrestle with this same dilemma nine centuries later?

For Further Reading

Hildegard of Bingen and Her Vision of the Feminine, by Nancy Fierro (1994, Carondelet Productions). "Hildegard comes to us today," says the author, "because we need her." This book is a brief introduction to Hildegard's life and accomplishments.

Hildegard of Bingen's Book of Divine Works with Letters and Songs, edited by Matthew Fox (1987, Bear and Company). Turn to Hildegard's original works in this volume, including some of her pithy and frank letters to popes and saints.

Hildegard of Bingen's Medicine, by Wighard Strehlow and Gottfried Hertzka (1988, Bear and Company). This includes some of her texts revealing her wisdom about body, mind, emotions and spirit.

Hildegard, The Last Year, by Barbara Lachman (1997, Shambhala). This is another piece of historical imagining by the author of the featured book this month. Imagine what it was like to be punished by being forbidden to celebrate the Divine Office, the daily cycle of prayer.

Scarlet Music, by Joan Ohanneson (1997, Crossroad). This is a novel dramatizing the life of Hildegard.

The Life of the Holy Hildegard, by the monks Gottfried and Theoderic (1995, The Liturgical Press). This account, first translated from Latin to German and then from German to English, is written by two of her contemporaries.

The Windows of Faith: Prayers of Holy Hildegard, edited by Walburga Storch (1997, The Liturgical Press). Here you will find prayers and songs written by Hildegard.

Linda Post Bushkofsky serves as associate synod executive for communication and interpretation for the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, PC (USA). She is a member of Edina Community Lutheran Church, Edina, Minn.

In order to say an enthusiastic hello to the new, one must say a good and proper goodbye to what has been. Unfinished business from a previous phase of life and work usually gets in the way of new business in new settings or relationships.

As we move through our own stressful seasons of transition, we can gain great insights from God's faithful people of previous generations. The Bible chronicles one transition story after another: Abraham and Sarah heeded the call to go and be on the move. Moses and Miriam were called to be transition coaches, big time. The prophets heard and spoke a word from the Lord calling for change of direction. And Jesus' school for disciples was a wandering academy with classrooms set up on a moment's notice mountainside, seaside, bedside, even graveside.

The life of faith is a journey. In the season of Lent, we travel with Jesus on his poignant journey toward Jerusalem at Passover time. With Holy Week, we enter the final phase of the journey.

The Journey from Palm Sunday to Easter



by Michael Cooper-White

WEEK OF THE GREAT TRANSITION

In the history of the cosmos, one short week became a defining moment for the world! It was the week of the Great Transition, the week when Jesus of Nazareth was changed in the most dramatic transformation ever witnessed by human beings. And even as he was being changed—from wandering teacher to condemned criminal, from godly foot soldier to humble foot washer, from miraculous healer to crucified victim, from gentle servant to triumphant Savior—Jesus was changing all around him, indeed changing the entire course of history.

Since ancient times, the days from Palm Sunday through Holy Saturday have often been called the Great Week. Great indeed was God's self-sacrificial solution to our human dilemma of sinful self-destruction! Great indeed was the pathos of the

upper room where Jesus hosted the simple supper that we keep doing over and over again “in remembrance.” Great indeed was the faithful courage of Jesus in the garden as he prayed, “If possible, let this

cup pass from me, but in the end your will be done." Great indeed his unflinching witness before Herod and Pilate, his calm response to his condemnation, his pilgrimage to Golgotha along the Via Dolorosa. Too great to measure his soft-spoken assurance to his repentant fellow execution partner, "Today you will be with me in paradise." Great beyond all greatness his taking unto himself on that cruel cross all of our human cruelty to our own selves and others!

TRIDIUM TO EASTER: AN AMAZING TRANSFORMATION

Taken together as one continuous three-day liturgical celebration of the central event of Christianity—Jesus' death and resurrection—Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday are referred to as the Triduum. On Thursday, there was a supper unlike any other when Jesus dined with his disciples. As Jesus washed their feet, they must have recognized in some measure that things were moving to a new phase. On Good Friday, after the long night in Gethsemane, there was a hurried trial in which the defendant was not even given a public defender. He was condemned and forced to carry his own means of execution to the hill where he was hung to die. On Holy Saturday, it appeared to be all over. This was perhaps the day when it was all really sinking in for the disciples, when they allowed themselves to feel an enormous measure of guilt because they had abandoned or even denied him in his hours of greatest need. They could not even begin to say hello to the rest of their lives, because they had not said a proper goodbye. In the hour of Jesus' grievous transition into death, they had run away and scattered. Following his hurried entombment, they did not even congregate with their casseroles for some common and

appropriate grieving rituals. Only a handful of women (no surprise that they would do the dirty work!) made plans for some proper burial preparations.

But at the culmination of the Great Week, in a decisive, defining moment during the night of the Sabbath or in the wee hours of the first day of the new week, came the roar of the resurrection. God—whom the church has historically called Father but who can be known in our hearts also as divine mother—stood at the door of the tomb of Joseph of Arimethea and roared like a lioness whose cub had been cannibalized by her own kind: "It cannot be!" "Death shall not have the last word!" In that roar of the resurrection lies the Great Transformation!

Mirrored in Jesus' journey from Palm Sunday to Easter are the journeys of our own lives. We too experience the highs of grand entries, of those around us shouting hosanna. We too descend to the depths of sorrow—the Maundy Thursdays when we know that the death of a beloved parent, child, or spouse lurks just around the corner. We too experience our little crucifixions, when dreams are nailed to crosses of our own or others' construction. We too have our moments of desperation when we cry out, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" And then we too hear the great promise that comes at the end of the long, grueling great weeks of our own great lives: Death is not here! Life in God is the final word!

So now we go on. Because of God's divine roar of the resurrection, we shall never live the same again. All our future times of transition, grief, and stress can be set within the context of the Great Week's transitions and transformations!



The Rev. Michael Cooper-White is president of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Penn.

Marking the Times of Our Lives

OUR NEED FOR RITUALS

by Linda Witte Henke



It could have been any gathering: three couples and their teen-age children assembled for a backyard cookout. There was the typical banter about one teen's hair, admonitions about not burning the steaks, chidings about snatched samplings of food.

But once the meal had concluded, the group reassembled in a circle and did something anything but ordinary. "The Lord be with you!" an adult leader began. "And also with you!" the group responded.

Together, they began a responsive exchange that drew on familiar words from the psalms. "Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, . . . Give me understanding that I may keep your law."

Next, one of the teens began to read from scripture: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. . . ."

The leader then addressed the group. "We are gathered to celebrate Jeff's acquisition of a driver's license and to ask God's blessing on his use of this added privilege and responsibility." The leader asked Jeff whether he was prepared to commit him-

self to responsible use of his driver's license. Jeff replied, "I am, and I ask God to help and guide me." The leader's additional comments emphasized, for Jeff and those who stood with him, some of the responsibilities inherent in adult driving privileges.

The leader's attention then shifted to Jeff's parents and friends. "Responsible driving habits are more readily established with the support of family and friends. Do you promise to support Jeff in his commitment to safe and responsible driving?" he asked them.

Their responses came in both word and symbol. "We, your parents, present you with this set of car keys. With them comes our confidence in your ability, our hope for your maturity, and our prayers for your safety." Then his friends said, "We, your friends, present you with this key chain. With it comes our encouragement and support for driving safely, responsibly, and courteously."

Together, they all prayed for Jeff's faithful stewarding of the privileges and responsibilities being entrusted to him. The rite concluded with exchanged greetings of peace, from which playful banter again began to emerge. Soon, they were once again engaged in good-natured debates over who was entitled to the largest portion of dessert.

Our Need for Ritual

Marking important life events and experiences with ritual invites reflection on their meaning, their significance. The presentation of an award marks the achievement of excellence. The shifting of a tassel signals the completion of one adventure, the beginning of another. An exchange of rings gives tangible expression to promises of lifelong commitment. In death and in life, in times of sorrow and in times of joy, we long for ritual expression.

My own interest in ritual began early in life. My mother tells of arriving home from the hospital to the crowd of neighborhood children I had assembled on the front porch to welcome my baby sister. Even at the tender age of seven, I instinctively knew that an addition to one's family is an event that warrants recognition.

In the decades since, my early instincts have been affirmed through participation in rituals ranging from baptisms to campfire sing-alongs, from confirmations to sorority inductions, from awards banquets to ordinations. Somewhere along the way, I began to recognize that we experience many more significant events in our lives than our culture has rituals to recognize. And so, with each passing year, I've found myself crafting rituals to mark occasions of significance in the lives of friends, family, and parishioners.

Tom F. Driver, former Paul Tillich Professor of Theology and Culture at Union Theological Seminary, contends that ritual has the capacity to deepen and strengthen communal bonds and to bring about personal and social transformation. His research into the ritual practices of cultures around the world left him convinced that our contemporary Western culture is in urgent need of a rebirth of the ritual observances that have been largely lost to the age of modern rationalism (*The Magic of Ritual: Our Need for Liberating Rites that Transform Our Lives and Our Communities*, Driver, 1991).

Driver's conviction is shared by Roy M. Oswald, who credits ritual observance with the capacity to help people navigate the often painful transitions from a familiar past to an uncertain future. He calls for congregational leaders to be intentional in helping Christians learn new ways of ritualizing life experiences (*Transforming Rituals: Daily Practices for Changing Lives*, Oswald and Trumbauer, 1999).

My own experiences affirm Driver's and Oswald's findings. Someone who participated with

me in a ritual marking a friend's miscarriage asked about a ritual to celebrate the homecoming of an adopted child. Someone who accompanied a friend to a blessing of pets asked about a ritual for when a pet dies. A participant in the ritual blessing of a friend's home wistfully remarked that she wished she and her husband had had a ritual for when they moved her mother-in-law into an assisted-care residence. Someone who participated in a bedside ritual for their dying loved one later asked about a ritual to mark the anniversary of their loved one's death. Throughout the times and seasons of life, we long for rituals that acknowledge what we cannot fully understand and that give voice to feelings for which we do not have adequate words.

The longing to mark the times of our lives with ritual observance is what provided the impetus for my book, *Marking Time: Christian Rituals For All Our Days* (Morehouse Publishing, 2001). So often, it's only a few years down the road, from a position of retrospection, that we begin to discern how ordinary life events and experiences were actually signposts of changed directions, seasons of growth, new beginnings. Ritual observances bless us with opportunities for in-the-moment reflection on the significance of many of those events and experiences.

Although there are many forms of ritual expression, I choose a form that is unabashedly Christian. I draw heavily on scripture because I believe these sacred writings have the power to speak with new relevance to every generation. I draw on the church's liturgical patterns because I believe daily life rituals need to be in relationship with, adjunct to, the worship life of the faith community, rather than a substitute for it. I encourage the incorporation of tangible symbols because I believe our experiences of the spiritual are made memorable in the material. I prompt the use of touch, through the sharing of the peace and

the laying on of hands, because I believe these acts are reminiscent of the divine touch that shaped and formed us and called us to life.

Although many people long for experiences of ritual, my experience has been that most people are less than conversant in the practice of it. So the rituals in *Marking Time* were developed as an introduction to ritual observance. Each offering is a fully developed ritual and includes suggestions to aid preparations for that ritual's application. My hope is that, as people become comfortable with using the rituals I've developed, they will feel empowered to move on to crafting their own ritual observances to mark additional times and seasons of life.

Rituals relating to pregnancy, childbirth, personal achievement, and engagement for marriage mark times for celebrating God's blessing. Rituals for blessing pets, a teenager's transition to adult driving privileges, and retirement mark times when consecration can be God's instrument for renewal. Rituals relating to unemployment, leave-taking, preparation for surgery, and dissolution of marriage mark times when we are blessed by the encouraging presence of our faith communities. Rituals for when violence has been experienced, a loved one is seriously ill, or life-support is discontinued mark times when we yearn for the comforting assurance of God's presence.

Throughout all the times and seasons of life, ritual observance invites reflection on how God is at work among us—shaping us, transforming us, readying us for the endless possibility that is God's unfolding future.

In addition to writing *Marking Time: Christian Rituals For All Our Days* (Morehouse Publishing: 800-877-0012), Linda Witte Henke has been a parish pastor, preacher, and seminar leader. She currently serves at Saint Peter Lutheran Church, Englewood, Colo.

TOUCHING THE LIVES OF YOUNG

MAASAI WOMEN

by Deb Pangerl

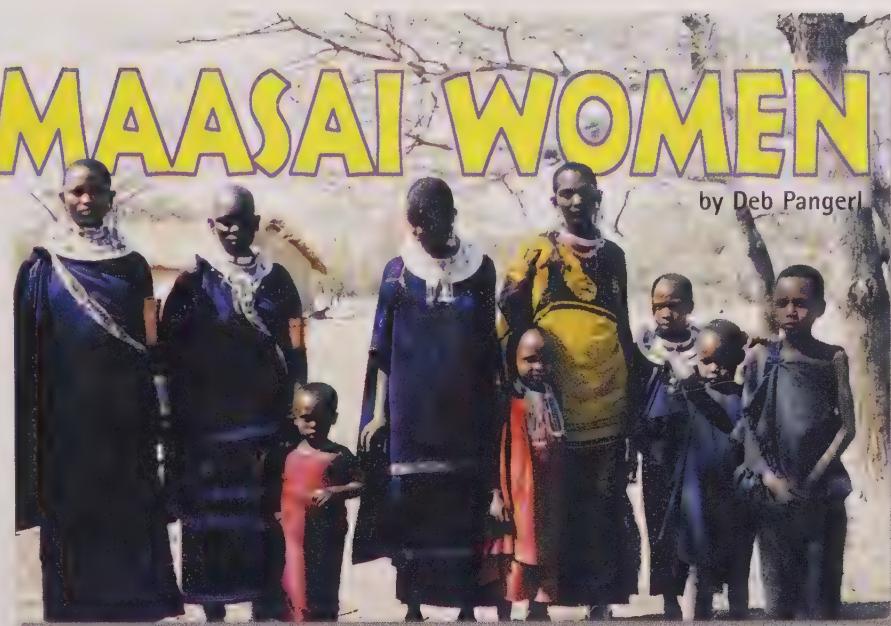
I saw the hunger in their eyes. But it wasn't for food—it was hunger for human dignity.

Last November, I traveled to East Africa on a study seminar through Women of the ELCA and the Division for Global Mission. We visited the Maasai Girls School in Arusha, Tanzania. We saw young Maasai girls who wanted more than the sixth-grade education that the government provides. It lit a spark in me to find out more about them.

After I returned home, I received an email from my friend Phoebe Msigomba, who works in the women's department at the Iringa Diocese in Tanzania. Phoebe had also participated in the study seminar. She knew four Maasai girls who desperately wanted to attend school, but they needed help. Time was running out for them.

The Maasai are nomads. They hold onto their customs of circumcision of young girls and forced marriages. A husband can have five to eight wives. A man can even pay a booking fee for a baby girl so that he can marry her when she reaches puberty. The girls also are exposed to HIV/AIDS.

A mother whose husband had left the family brought her young daughter to Phoebe. The mother wanted her daughter to attend school. When the brothers found out that their sister wanted to attend school, they had her raped. The girl did get pregnant, but she is very courageous and determined. She is attending her first year of post-secondary school.



Another girl was being forced into marriage, but her father said he would stop the marriage if someone would pay her tuition. She is attending school with the help of Phoebe and other women who have reached out to her.

A one-year scholarship is \$250, which includes room and board, a Bible, two pairs of shoes, a bed, a plate, and other items necessary to begin school.

I often think about how the Maasai women's hearts must break when they think of their daughters' futures. They certainly love their children no less than we do ours. If we want to make a difference in these children's lives, we need to start with one child. That child will touch at least 50 lives by returning to her village and educating others.

If the Spirit moves you to help these girls, you can contact me at 320-358-4675 or dpangerl@ecenet.com for further information. Contributions can be made through Women of the ELCA. (Make check payable to Women of the ELCA and write "Maasai program" on the memo line).

Deb Pangerl is a member of the Companion Synod Task Force for the St. Paul Area Synod.

As I write these words, winter is approaching, and Chicago's gray, early-December clouds seep like bus exhaust over the buildings and empty trees. And then, just when I think it can't get any darker, night falls. At 4:25 P.M. Ah, winter.

Since World War I, we've taken an hour from our clocks and played fast and loose with it. We "spring ahead" in the first week of April, the official start of Daylight Savings Time, and "fall back" during the last week of October, when we revert to Standard Time. This ritual, whose idea originated with Ben Franklin, is intended to give us more daylight hours in the evening in summer, and also to save energy.

In the winter, of course, it has the reverse effect—not so much the energy-saving part, but the evening hours of light. As we cross winter's threshold, the clocks "fall back" and the evening light, already waning, gets another push out the door. Even though it's only an hour's difference, consider the length of an hour spent having a root canal, sitting in a traffic jam when you have a bad back, or listening to a co-worker snap her gum.

I've always been affected by light and interested in stories about it. In Alaska, domestic disturbances increase during the longest nights of winter, which in Alaska are pretty long. I tend to remember some of the fascinating details of those stories, including a report of Alaskans throwing ketchup bottles at each other (after dinner? over dinner?). "Why ketchup?" I thought when I read that. "Why not?" I think now. In the dark, we all struggle.

In fact, according to the National Mental Health Association, 25 percent of the general population suffers from a mild form of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), where a lack of light makes a person feel depressed and listless.

We know that living creatures need light. Plants need it to photosynthesize. Our bodies crave it, too. Without the metabolizing factor of sunlight, our bones would become soft and weak, like those of the women who have lived under the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Many of those women suffer osteomalacia because their burqas have shielded them too much from the sun.

GRASPING *for the Light*

by Clare La Plante

The pagans knew the value of light. One of their biggest annual festivals celebrated the summer solstice, the longest day of the year. Every June 23, they went a little crazy—lighting bonfires, participating in an ancient version of spin the bottle, and other general shenanigans. What they were really doing was celebrating light—and the life it brings. We've appropriated the time of the solstice as John the Baptist's Day. (Consider what he stands for—casting out the darkness of spiritual ignorance.) In Europe, they still light the bonfires.

But how do we hold onto light when it dims in our world?

For one, we can stop struggling against the winter darkness. In the past—before electricity—we would have lit candles, stayed inside, and gone to bed earlier. We would have taken part in nature's hibernation. Today, we march to a man-made neon and halogen schedule. Try instead to go with the flow. To everything, after all, there is a season, and a time and purpose.

Next, consider the words of Christ. Be the light of the world. Let your light shine before others. Don't

hide your light under a bushel. In other words, be yourself. Have you been taking advantage of winter's short days to germinate? The glare of artificial light—television, billboards, mall lights—is a neon block to the soul. So is the reckless pace of our lives. Instead, sit still. Take time to breath and pray. Otherwise, you might, to paraphrase mythologist Joseph Campbell, climb to the top of the ladder and realize it's leaning against the wrong wall.

Relish the winter darkness. It has its own light. A friend of mine who grew up in the country says that winter light comes in at a lower angle, so, depending on the time of day, it hits you right at eye—or heart—level.

And when the full light returns soon, you'll be a part of it. Think of it as a torch being handed back and forth between you and the natural world. Emily Dickinson "watched the sun rise, a ribbon at a time." So you can witness your soul emerging this spring, color by layer of color.

Clare La Plante is a writer and reporter from Chicago.





READER CALL

Powerful Lessons from the Women in Our Lives

I don't remember how old I was, but I was old enough to go out into the garden and help my grandmother dig up fresh potatoes. We were on our once-every-five-years visit to her farm in Nebraska all the way from Corpus Christi, Texas.

I remember my grandmother as a very kind and gentle woman. As we walked together to the garden, I carried the empty bucket. When we arrived at the potato patch, my grandmother sat down on a small stool, digging fork in hand, and got to work. When she brought the fork up, beautiful potatoes appeared among the clods of dirt. My job was to shake the dirt from the potatoes and put them in the bucket.

Later, I was asked to peel the potatoes for dinner. I thought I was doing a good job, but my mother chided me for getting too much of the potato with the peeling. "You're only supposed to get the peeling and not the potato." My grandmother said ever so gently, "Leave the child alone and let her be. She will learn to peel potatoes soon enough." Those words have stayed in my memory to this day, and I am almost 68.

From those few words, I learned to give people a chance, and let them develop their skills. I learned to be encouraging and a motivator, always ready to lend a helping hand whenever needed. The memory of

grandmother's gentle wisdom provided me with the insight I have needed to raise a physically disabled daughter, and now to help raise five grandchildren. It gave me the motivation to work in helping professions, and it continues to provide stamina as I serve on several boards and as a volunteer at a nursing home.

I thank my dear grandmother, Maria Margaretha Ida Loewe, for her words of wisdom, and I salute her as a woman who taught me a powerful lesson.

Liz Urban—Clifton, Texas

My birthday came during a week of gloomy spring weather and too much work. When two members of my prayer group invited me out to breakfast at the local café, I was delighted. We decided it was also a good opportunity to take Ethel out with us. She was 93 and becoming more and more housebound. We soon discovered that going out with Ethel was quite a treat. Almost everyone at the café came over and spoke with us. She shared little jokes with each of them and loved telling us their stories. People were drawn to her cheerfulness and some quality, not easy to define, that made people feel good.

I'm certain that Ethel had prayed for each of them at one time or another, during times of sickness, strife, change, or uncertainty, and that she had

rejoiced on their behalf when their children were born, a new job was found, or they achieved success in one area or another. Ethel prayed unceasingly with full confidence that God would answer every prayer in his own time. Over the years, she had learned to walk with the Lord constantly and that relationship gave her great joy. That does not mean that her life was easy—it was not—but it was rich and full.

Several months after she left us, I was driving through the park late one autumn afternoon, my heart heavy with grief. I'm certain it was God who turned my face so that I might see something beautiful—three maple trees standing in a row, one yellow, the next orange, and the third in shades of pink. I thought of my friend Ethel and how the love of the Lord shone through her life, touching each of us with hope.

Rose Wood Trenbeath—Cavalier, North Dakota

To speak life-giving words, to encourage, to help someone believe in herself and her abilities can be tremendously influential at any age. A person with just such a gift came into my life recently, and I have been profoundly affected.

I have written devotional messages and poems for years. When I learned that Donna was a writer, I showed her some of my pieces. The usual reaction I received when I did this was, "Oh, isn't it nice that you do this." And that would be the end of it. Not with my friend Donna. She nourished me with encouragement, looked for opportunities to use my material, and most of all, spoke life to me. She said such things as, "you have great ideas," "your material touches me," "you have so much to offer." Then she would say, "Try doing this. Here's a place for your material." Her feedback changed my whole perception of myself and of what I could do, and opened all sorts of new possibilities.

Now I look for ways to encourage someone else. I know that everyone has special gifts and talents that need to be recognized and fostered. Just a few words can do the job: yes, you can do it, you have the ability, now just do it. I find also that I am encouraged when I encourage someone else.

I am grateful for Donna, and I thank God for putting her in my life. She is an inspiration to me.

Kristine Lamp—Savage, Minnesota



Session 7

The Unseen Hope



by James Arne Nestingen

Study Text

Exodus 2 and 15; Numbers 12

The Sixth Petition

Save us from the time of trial.

What is this?

Answer: It is true that God tempts no one, but we ask in this prayer that God would preserve and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins, and that, although we may be attacked by them, we may finally prevail and gain the victory. (from *Luther's Small Catechism*)

Memory Verse

“And Miriam sang to them: ‘Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.’” (Exodus 15:21)

Overview

We all experience temptation. As Christ delivers us, we are exposed to the powers arrayed against him. But Christ marks us with the sign of the cross, and we live in the hope of the resurrection, preserved and kept in true faith.

Opening

“Lord, take my hand and lead me Upon life’s way; Direct, protect and feed me From day to day. Without your grace and favor I go astray; So take my hand O Savior, and lead the way.” (Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me, *Lutheran Book of Worship* 333)

The Prophet Miriam

Paul writes in Romans 14 that all of Scripture was written for hope. Sometimes the Bible tells us stories that are tinged with despair.

The beginning of Miriam's story is fairly sunny, in spite of a cloudy backdrop. Although she isn't named directly, Miriam undoubtedly is the older sister who stands watch while the baby Moses floats in his basket in the bulrushes.

1. **Read Exodus 2:1–10. Why was Moses hidden away? What can you tell about Miriam from the way she handled the pharaoh's daughter?**

The first time we meet Miriam by name is in Exodus 15:20, when she is introduced as holding a very important biblical role: she is a prophet. Up to this point, the story of God's dealings with the pharaoh featured Moses and Aaron. Apparently it was a family affair, though, since Miriam is also identified as a person through whom God was at work.

2. **Take a look at Exodus 15:1 and 15:21. Do these two verses give you a clue as to who wrote the song in Exodus 15? What does this tell you about Miriam's standing with the community?**

Tensions among the Siblings

The Exodus was no picnic, even if God did provide both manna and quail. The people struggled and wandered. As might be expected, trouble broke out among the leaders themselves. Perhaps trouble was even more likely since the leaders were brothers and sister. So Aaron compromised himself with the golden calf (Exodus 32:21–24).

When the story begins in Numbers 12, Aaron and Miriam are after Moses about the "Cushite" (or Arabian) woman he had married before it all started.

Read Ezra 10:2–5. Although it comes from a later time, this passage illustrates a long-standing conviction among the Israelites about marriage to foreigners. God had made the promise of the covenant specifically to Abraham, Sarah, and their descendants. On this basis, people like Ezra and many others wanted to preserve the bloodline. They also knew that foreign wives often brought their family gods with them, encouraging idolatry.

3. **How might Moses' marriage to Zipporah explain some of the difficulties and tensions among the Israelites?**

The Heavy Hand

This is where the story starts to get rough. Aaron had already been a problem for both God and Moses, and now Aaron would become a problem again. But for some reason, God was especially upset with Miriam. When the cloud that accompanied God's presence opened, Miriam looked as though she had leprosy—her skin was as white as the cloud had been.

Seeing this horror, Aaron and Moses both cried out for help. Aaron, confessing his sin, called to Moses, asking him to use his standing with God for Miriam's protection (Numbers 12:11–12). Moses was much more direct, saying, "O God, please heal her" (Numbers 12:13). Still, God wouldn't back off completely. Citing an old custom used by the Israelites when a daughter shamed her father, God insisted that Miriam be put out of the camp for a week.

Moses complied, but he and all the people waited until Miriam was restored before going on their way. Clearly, the people trusted Miriam and respected her as one of their leaders.

4. **It is important to note that throughout the story, Miriam never lost her place as a prophet. If you were Miriam, how would you have felt about being downgraded in comparison to Moses? How would you have regarded the leprosy? What do you suppose Miriam thought about during that week?**

More Trouble

The report of Miriam's death follows without further incident in Numbers 20:1. By that time, the people had arrived in the wilderness of Kadesh. But that was hardly the end of their struggles. In fact, sometimes the story of the Exodus sounds like a list of disasters. Moses had already sent spies to check out the promised land—they came back with reports of riches but with their confidence in the Israelites' power shaken (Numbers 13). There had been another revolt against Moses' leadership, with Aaron becoming a target as well (Numbers 16). While Miriam was dying, there was trouble again. This time the people couldn't find water and they went right after Moses and Aaron.

Read Numbers 20:3–5. Once again, God came through. In spite of the people's complaining, or possibly because of it, God provided water, bringing it right out of a rock (Numbers 20:8–11).

5. **Read Numbers 20:12. The people groused, griped, and got their water. Aaron and Moses, who had every reason to be sick and tired of the people, still did what they were told.**

Moses struck the rock, the water flowed, and everyone drank. But God saw flat-out unbelief in Aaron and Moses' hearts. What do you think was their unbelief? What do you think of God's behavior in this story?

Do Not Put Us to the Test

Some TV and radio preachers today say that if you commit your life to Christ, things will be easier for you. In the Bible, however, the opposite appears to be true. Our lives start to look like his, marked by both the cross and the resurrection. That is why Jesus teaches us to pray, "do not put us to the test."

In the service of Holy Baptism in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, there is a specific point where the person being baptized receives the mark of the cross on their forehead (p. 124). The pastor says, "Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever."

6. **Read Romans 6:4–5. How are we united with Christ in a death like his? How is this reflected in the shape of life in faith? What does this do to the hope of the resurrection? How is the marking of the cross given at baptism connected to the sufferings and hopes of everyday life?**

Despair and Misbelief

The same powers that attack God's word and a person's faith also attack us in the everyday, using lies to draw us into the most troublesome kind of sins.

Both despair and unbelief are more powerful than our wills. So when something bad happens, a person says, "I am not going to let this bother me."

Then, after a while, when it still bothers, the person says, "I can't let this bother me. I'm going to do this or that, and then I will feel better." Still later, still bothered, the person says, "I must have done something wrong. If only I did this or that and really worked at it, I wouldn't feel like this."

People of faith do not voluntarily surrender their confidence in Christ Jesus. Rather, like the Israelites stuck in the wilderness without water, we begin to think that we made a mistake and should never have gone on the trip. But this is misbelief. Or, like Aaron and Moses, faced with one disappointment and trouble after another, we come to the conviction that it is never going to end, that the problems are going to keep feeding on one another until there is no exit. That is unbelief.

7. What do you think the difference is between misbelief and unbelief?

Preserving and Keeping

God preserves and keeps us in Christ Jesus, first of all, by teaching us to pray. The devil, the world, and the old sinner in us convince us that we are in control of everything that happens to us. Then we get stuck in ourselves, captured by despair, pride, or both. Jesus teaches us to relinquish our troubles and to hand them over in the confidence that one way or another—usually with a surprise—Jesus will handle them. Then we can rejoice in the gifts of daily bread and expect a future shaped by the forgiveness of sins. Our prayers are like snowflakes. They look small or helpless, as though they would melt in our folded hands. But as they pile up, they etch out the face of mountains as the glaciers move over them.

8. If you are comfortable doing so, identify a time in your life when despair and misbelief or unbelief had become a temptation. Or perhaps you can think of someone you know or a biblical character who struggled with misbelief or unbelief. What did the person do when they handed over their troubles to God?

God spoke to Miriam in dreams, visions, and riddles but face-to-face with Moses. Since Christ's death and resurrection, God deals with us through the spoken word and through the sacraments.

Think of all those who have brought God's word to you at times when you were tempted by misbelief or unbelief. There are some people whom we expect to speak of God's word, but the Lord loves to bring it home to us from sources that seem unlikely to us. Many parents, for example, can tell of having heard the word of God from their children. Many teachers can tell of having heard God's word from students. And many pastors can tell you how many times God's word came to them from a custodian or the parish secretary. God knows that the word has to be spread wide so that it will get through in one way or another.

Remember the words "Save us from the time of trial." Often that little word "us" goes overlooked, but it reminds us that we are not on our own. Despair thinks it is all alone; misbelief thinks there must be somebody else but doesn't know who or where; unbelief is convinced there isn't anyone and can't be. Faith knows that the heart is in God's hands, that God is always leading the way, and that there are neighbors, even two or three, just enough to say, "us."

God and Suffering

At the beginning of the explanation, Martin Luther draws together the words of Scripture to say, “God tempts no one to sin.” Given what Christ has done for us, it is impossible to imagine that God would deliberately set out to hurt anyone. Yet Miriam the prophet became a leper; Aaron and Moses, caught in their unbelief, were denied entrance to the promised land. The closest Moses got was a good look. Even though the devil, the world, and the sinful self were responsible for these troubles, it is difficult to avoid thinking that God must have had something to do with it.

Standing at hospital beds or by open caskets, people of faith say both things: that God could never have caused the pain, and that God must have caused the pain. Both words can be deeply comforting. The conviction that God doesn’t cause pain provides some assurance that God always helps; the conviction that God is behind it all brings with it the hope that however bad it appears, God will turn it to good.

God’s implication in suffering is one of the mysteries of the Christian faith. But in the mystery, there is a deep certainty. We know that Christ is for us. We know that we will never be

abandoned, no matter how deep or dark the valley we face. Whatever happens, in Christ we know the sign of the cross and the hope of the resurrection. The cross will never be so heavy that God can’t lift and carry it for us. Suffering isn’t the last word; Easter and its promises of freedom from sin and the promise of everlasting life in God is triumphant.

Prayer Partners

With your prayer partner (or partners), place your hands on one another’s heads and say these words: “You have been marked with the cross of Christ forever. He will raise you from the dead.” Then pray together, relinquishing your burdens to him and thanking him for those who bring the good word to us when we need it.

Looking Ahead

At the end of the Lord’s Prayer, in one magnificent cry of faith, we encompass all of our hopes and dreams in a single phrase: “deliver us from evil.” We can be certain that God is doing that right now, and will in the future.

James Arne Nestingen is professor of church history at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

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After “I Believe”

Our Annual Financial Review

by Catherine I.H. Braasch

Stewardship is everything I do after I say, ‘I believe.’ I first heard these wise words nearly two decades ago from one of the most faithful stewards I’ve ever known, the Rev. Bob Armstrong, staff person for stewardship in the former Lutheran Church in America and later in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Bob was very good at equipping God’s people to be more faithful, effective stewards of all that God had given them because for him, stewardship was more than a staff ministry position: It was first, foremost, and finally everything he did after he said that he believed in God as creator, savior, and giver of life. Whether he was making decisions about his own stewardship or challenging his sisters and brothers in Christ to be joyful givers, Bob taught by his 24/7/365 example. Bob’s example, captured in that statement, has shaped my stewardship of all that Women of the ELCA participants and friends have entrusted to this churchwide ministry.

An annual audit of finances is one important measurement and evaluation of financial stewardship. Each year, Women of the ELCA churchwide finances are audited. This audit is administered according to the rigorous requirements of both ELCA financial policies and generally accepted accounting practices for non-profit organizations. On the pages that follow, you’ll find these important financial details about Women of the ELCA churchwide ministries:

Results of the audit for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2001—both the Statement of Activities (revenues and expenses) and the Statement of Financial Position (assets and liabilities). These figures show the first fruits of a three-year plan to bring ministry expectations and expenditures into balance with available resources. Women of the ELCA has a lot to be proud of in terms of our financial condition and management.

Budget comparisons for year 2002 and 2001.

Note that the budget categories have changed since 2001. These changes reflect the way in which the churchwide women’s organization staff implements the ministries approved by our churchwide executive board. Each category reflects the work of many people, both staff and volunteers, rather than the work of any one person.

Financial figures are one type of measurement. At the same time, numbers alone cannot begin to describe what God is doing through Women of the ELCA.

Think of the women and men, girls and boys who have met Christ in the people, programs, and passion of Women of the ELCA. Think of those who are living in poverty, in prison, in poor health and poor spirit, whose lives are touched and transformed by your stewardship of self, time, and possessions. They are around the world, across the street, and in our own congregations, workplaces, and homes. They are also you and me, whose lives have been changed and whose stewardship grows out of our confession of faith, “I believe . . .”.

Catherine I.H. Braasch has been executive director, Women of the ELCA, since September 1, 1997.

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
Years Ended January 31, 2001 and 2000

REVENUE AND SUPPORT	BUDGET	ACTUAL	PRIOR YEAR
CONTRIBUTED REVENUE			
Regular Offerings	\$ 1,474,234	\$ 976,251	\$ 1,004,942
Thankofferings	1,513,838	1,490,948	1,529,144
Designated Gifts	399,598	406,574	585,186
SWO Convention Offerings	70,565	72,503	71,816
Endowment contributions	-	32,748	122,029
Value of Contributed Office Space	-	146,438	94,000
Other Offerings	72,030	129,025	101,813
Total Contributed Support	\$ 3,530,265	\$ 3,254,487	\$ 3,508,930
OTHER INCOME			
Investment/Other Income	\$ 383,607	\$ 494,245	\$ 274,914
Total Contributed Revenue and Other Income	\$ 383,607	\$ 494,245	\$ 274,914
Triennial Convention	-	-	668,360
Total Revenue and Support	\$ 3,913,872	\$ 3,748,732	\$ 4,452,204
EXPENDITURES	BUDGET	ACTUAL	PRIOR YEAR
PROGRAM AND SERVICES			
Resource Development & Management Group	\$ 795,764	\$ 664,304	\$ 791,380
Organizational Development Group	1,103,041	924,388	686,847
Executive Director Group	292,343	237,280	44,131
Administration & Finance Group	488,024	463,301	636,449
Grants & Scholarships	201,200	219,320	319,608
Governance	138,500	129,315	168,428
Value of Contributed Office Space	120,000	146,438	94,000
Total Program and Services	\$ 3,138,872	\$ 2,784,347	\$ 2,740,842
Gift to the ELCA	\$ 700,000	\$ 608,953	\$ 498,231
Total Program & Services and Gift to the ELCA	\$ 3,838,872	\$ 3,393,299	\$ 3,239,073
Triennial Convention	\$ 75,000	\$ 72,190	\$ 1,613,012
Total Expenditures	\$ 3,913,872	\$ 3,465,490	\$ 4,852,085

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

January 31, 2001 and 2000

ASSETS	2001	2000
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 40,778	\$ 32,215
Due from Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	1,215,160	1,120,115
INVESTMENTS AND OTHER INCOME-BEARING ACCOUNTS		
Participation in the ELCA Endowment Fund Pooled Trust	6,418,318	6,238,984
Beneficial Interest in perpetual trust	291,606	302,085
U.S. Treasury Notes	61,031	60,113
Notes receivable, net of allowance for doubtful accounts of \$50,000 in 2001 and \$30,000 in 2000	50,000	70,000
Total Investments and Other Income-Bearing Accounts	\$ 6,820,955	\$ 6,671,182
Prepaid expenses, other receivables and other assets	\$ 22,803	\$ 29,722
Furniture and equipment, net of accumulated depreciation of \$41,392 in 2001 and \$34,941 in 2000	42,375	46,852
Total Assets	\$ 8,142,071	\$ 7,900,086
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Liabilities - accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 287,077	\$ 328,334
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	5,035,337	4,850,573
Temporarily Restricted	1,530,568	1,454,359
Permanently Restricted	1,289,089	1,266,820
Total Net Assets	7,854,994	7,571,752
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 8,142,071	\$ 7,900,086

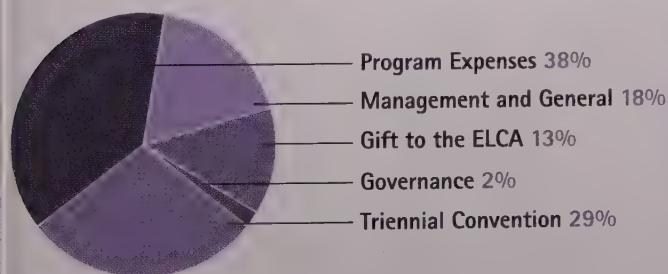
2002 AND 2001 BUDGET

REVENUE AND SUPPORT

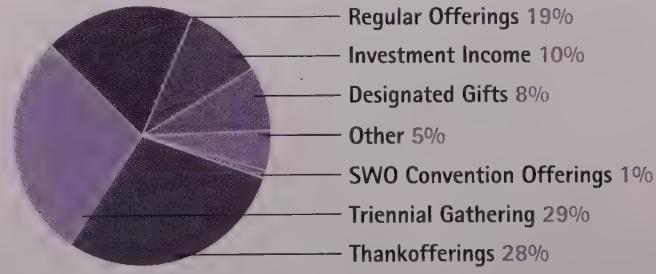
CONTRIBUTED REVENUE

	2002	2001
Regular Offerings	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,233,700
Thankofferings	1,475,000	1,213,550
Designated Gifts	395,000	328,350
SWO Convention Offerings	70,000	59,700
Other Offerings	75,000	55,700
Value of Contributed Office Space (non-cash)	146,438	94,000
Total Contributed Revenue Available for the current year	\$ 3,161,438	\$ 3,079,000
OTHER INCOME		
Investment/Other Income	\$ 500,000	\$ 533,114
Total Other Income	\$ 500,000	\$ 533,114
Total Contributed Revenue and Other Income	\$ 3,661,438	\$ 3,612,114
CHALLENGE FACTOR¹		
Total Revenue and Support Before Triennial Convention	\$ 24,372	\$ 266,656
TRIENNIAL CONVENTION (ADVANCE)		
Total Revenue and Support After Triennial Convention	\$ 3,685,810	\$ 3,878,770
EXPENDITURES	2002	2001
PROGRAM AND SERVICES		
Resource Development & Management Group	\$ -	\$ 1,015,971
Organizational Development Group	-	910,391
Administration & Finance Group	-	491,419
Executive Director Group	-	254,989
Governance	-	137,000
Grants & Scholarships	214,000	275,000
Anti-Racism and Cross Cultural Ministries	154,612	-
Periodicals and Products	619,886	-
Women's Ministry Programming	358,650	-
Special Assignments	8,000	-
Constituent Services	426,556	-
Fund Development and Stewardship	176,891	-
Operations	351,188	-
Executive and Organizational Services	432,789	-
Governance	96,800	-
Value of Contributed Office Space (non-cash)	146,438	94,000
Total Program and Services	\$ 2,985,810	\$ 3,178,770
GIFT TO THE ELCA		
Total Expenditures Before Triennial Convention	\$ 700,000	\$ 700,000
TRIENNIAL CONVENTION		
Total Expenditures After Triennial Convention	\$ 3,685,810	\$ 3,878,770
Total Expenditures After Triennial Convention	\$ 5,205,510	\$ 4,135,466

2002 BUDGETED EXPENDITURES



2002 BUDGETED INCOME



¹Net difference between Total Contributed Revenue and Other Income and Total Expenditures.



Share the Joy!

by Faith Fretheim

THE LETTERS WE RECEIVE FROM WOMEN OF THE ELCA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS BRING US SUCH JOY—THEY NEED TO BE SHARED WITH A WIDER AUDIENCE!

Carrie Bryant writes, “I am honored to accept the Women of the ELCA scholarship that has been awarded to me. To be blessed twice with an honor such as this is truly a sign that I have chosen the correct path. To know that this strong body of women is following by my side gives me tremendous strength.” Carrie is studying medicine at Oregon Health Services University in Portland and is a recipient of the Belmer Scholarship.

Elizabeth Coleman writes, “I feel both privileged and humbled by your faith in me and in my future. I appreciate how hard you must work to make these opportunities available, and I promise to work hard to ensure that your investment is well used. . . . I have been fortunate to have known and been encouraged and supported by many remarkable women in the Lutheran church. I appreciate this as one of Women of the ELCA’s many efforts toward helping women become empowered and in control of their lives.” Elizabeth received a scholarship from the Mehring Scholarship Fund.

“So,” you may be thinking, “how can I assist women returning to school?” We suggest the way that the New Jersey Synodical Women’s Organization has, as well as Nedlens Hester, Catherine Pell, the

family of Irene Drinkall Franke, and many other Women of the ELCA: Start by getting in touch with us (see the contact information at the bottom of this page) and asking for the brochure that lists each scholarship and a short explanation of its purpose. Then make a donation. The donations have ranged from \$17 to \$5,000. Some donors have honored a specific person and wanted the person to know about the honor; others have asked to remain anonymous in their gift in honor of a friend.

A wonderful surprise recently arrived in a large envelope from the Northern Texas–Northern Louisiana Synod. The donors weren’t women of the ELCA but a group of pastors—male and female—who attended the Tri-Synodical Theological Conference in Texas. They had decided that a portion of the offering collected there would go to the Herbert and Corinne Chilstrom Scholarship Fund for women seeking ordination in the ELCA.

We would love to hear from you and help you assist women like Carrie, Elizabeth, and all the other wonderful women who so appreciate the care and concern of Women of the ELCA. Give us a call!

Faith Fretheim is program director for scholarships for Women of the ELCA. She can be reached via email at fretheim@elca.org or at 800-638-3522 ext. 2736.

BETWEEN YOU AND ME

Putting a Face on Hope

by Catherine I.H. Braasch

IN THE JANUARY/FEBRUARY ISSUE, WE WERE INTRODUCED TO VIOLA RAHEB, A PALESTINIAN LUTHERAN, EDUCATOR, AND ADVOCATE FOR PEACE. WHEN ASKED HOW SHE COULD CLING TO HOPE UNDER THE EXHAUSTING CONDITIONS OF LIFE IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE, SHE OFFERED THIS:

"Hope is not something you can preach about, where people get it like an adrenaline rush and they are so happy and thrilled. . . . this is about something that keeps you waking up every morning, . . . despite all that is happening around you."

Viola asked *LWT* readers not to forget our 2,000 sisters and brothers in the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan. Late last year, I was privileged to be part of a delegation of ELCA leaders who went to Palestine to bear witness that we have not. In the places we hear of in the news—Jerusalem, Ramallah, Beit Jala, Bethlehem—we experienced the day-to-day precariousness of life in the Holy Land. I would get a dread feeling now and then, a feeling that I was seeing a future that I could neither imagine nor comprehend, that had both desperation and determination written across its face.

But at a school of the ELCJ, we saw Christian and Muslim girls and boys being educated together as whole persons, capable of living in and leading their communities beyond the polarizations of religion, gender, and class. At Augusta Victoria Hospital, at a

meeting with leaders of the three religions that call Jerusalem holy, and upon hearing of the ministry of the Lutheran World Federation's Vocational Training Center (supported in part by a grant from Women of the ELCA), once again I would see the future—but this time, it had hope written across its face as well.

Pray for the vigorous bearers of hope, especially our sisters in the Lutheran churches and schools on the West Bank. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, the holy city (Psalm 122:6), and for all the children of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar.

To join the ELCA prayer vigil for the Middle East, go to <http://www.loga.org/PrayerVigilHome.htm>



Kindergartners at Dar Al-Kalima School, Bethlehem, one of the Evangelical Lutheran Schools in Palestine and Jordan. The schools' holistic approach educates children, grades K-12, to build a healthy Palestinian society that respects individuality, encourages dialogue, seeks peace, promotes democracy, and rejects all forms of violence.



AMEN!

Open the Door to Ourselves

by Catherine Malotky

WHEN THERE IS ONLY SILENCE, THEN WE KNOW YOU, GOD. WHEN WE ARE SENT INTO THE WILDERNESS ALONE, LIKE MIRIAM OF OLD (NUMBERS 12:15), THEN WE CAN BE STILL ENOUGH TO HEAR YOUR VOICE.

Now the earth is re-awakening. Now we remember the days of Lent, when we look deeply into our souls to read there the story of our lives. Now we use the mirror of Good Friday and Easter to remember the whole of us, not just the part we dress up on Easter morning.

Each of us hides a part we would rather keep from the light of day, and from you, God. It is a tender part of ourselves, a vulnerable part. It is a part that can hear and be swayed by so many siren songs. It may parade as pride and control. When we are responsible for so much, it is easy to think we can control as much. But we know the desperation we feel deep down—when will it all fall apart? Or it may parade as relinquishment and passivity. When we have been told by so many that we do not measure up, it is hard to believe that you, the God of the whole universe, have fashioned us with intention and

purpose, as a gift to the world. It is easier to say, “Don’t bother about me.”

Times of trial open the door to this part of us. We confess that you have given us visions of your kingdom—a world that works for everyone, where needs are met and gifts called forth. Paul reminded us that even the creation groans in labor (Romans 8:22) awaiting the coming of your will and way.

Broaden my vision so
I can welcome both the
fear of Good Friday and the
promise fulfilled in Easter.

come. We would all be so much better off!

Save me from the time of trial. Broaden my vision so I can welcome both the fear of Good Friday and the promise fulfilled in Easter. Help me see your redeeming ways in every moment of my life. Out of every death comes new life from you.

Catherine Malotky serves in communications at the ELCA Board of Pensions. An ordained pastor, she has also been an editor, teacher, and parish pastor.

READER CALL**TOPICS AND DEADLINES**Mail or email to *LWT* Editorial Office

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The events of September 11, 2001, led many to question their faith. Did you find yourself with questions? What were they?

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Where and how do you go on vacation to get away for rest and renewal?

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How does your congregation or women's group reach out to God's children of all ages?

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What Pentecost worship and celebration ideas do you use in your congregation? What other resources or music do you use that can be helpful in planning a Pentecost service?

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"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?

Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."

Matthew 6:25-27, 33-34 NRSV

the magazine of Women of the ELCA

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